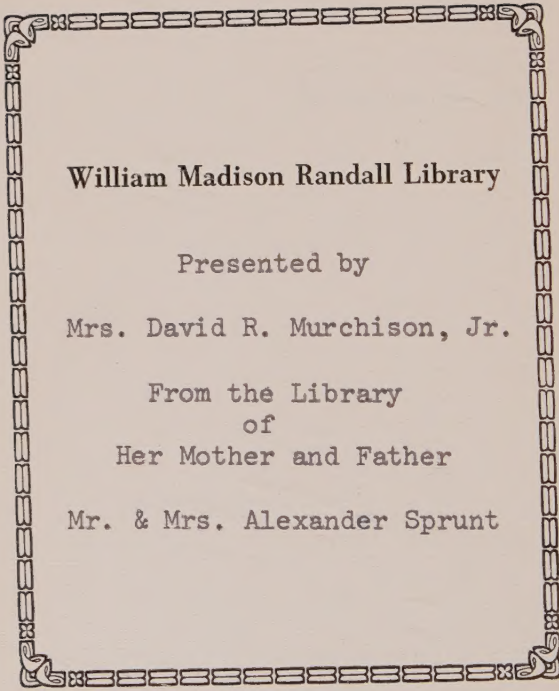


WALLEYED CASIN'S GHO

JANE BALDWIN COTTON



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**WALL-EYED CAESAR'S GHOST
AND OTHER SKETCHES**



“Mah Lawd, Pappy! Dem Niggahs Cert’n’y Kin Run!” (Page 22)

WALL-EYED CAESAR'S GHOST

AND OTHER SKETCHES

BY
JANE BALDWIN COTTON

Illustrated by
FREDERIC J. COTTON, M.D.



MARSHALL JONES COMPANY
BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

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Printed August, 1925

THE PLIMPTON PRESS · NORWOOD · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEDICATED
TO OUR "MAMMIES"
WITH APPRECIATION OF ALL
THEY HAVE BEEN TO
OUR FORBEARS, TO US
AND TO OUR CHILDREN

FOREWORD

THE ways and folk-lore of our old fashioned colored people have always appealed immensely to me. Knowing the race as I have from childhood, their traditions, their hymns and superstitions, their picturesqueness of speech and phantasies have naturally accumulated in my mind, persisting perhaps beyond their value and yet persisting — therefore these sketches.

I should like to be able to portray something of the near-feudalism with its care and training and kindly indulgence which was the attitude of the white people I have known or others like them, too of the trusting dependence, the loyalty and family pride which the negro in turn felt toward his white people.

There are not many now who can feel that relationship, but anything which

can serve to help toward an understanding of it seems worth while.

The "new negro" is an entirely different creature from the parent stock. Any one who really knows the race recognizes that his mind still has the same slant of wonderful subtlety and acumen which characterized that of his ancestors, and while he has progressed in many ways because of his remarkable imitative ability rather than initiative, he has utterly lost his former lovable qualities and picturesqueness.

The characters of these sketches are people I have known or others like them and for the illustrations which add so greatly to any interest the sketches may possess I am indebted to my husband, Dr. Frederic J. Cotton, who has tried, despite his "Damyank" handicap, to come to a real understanding of our colored people.

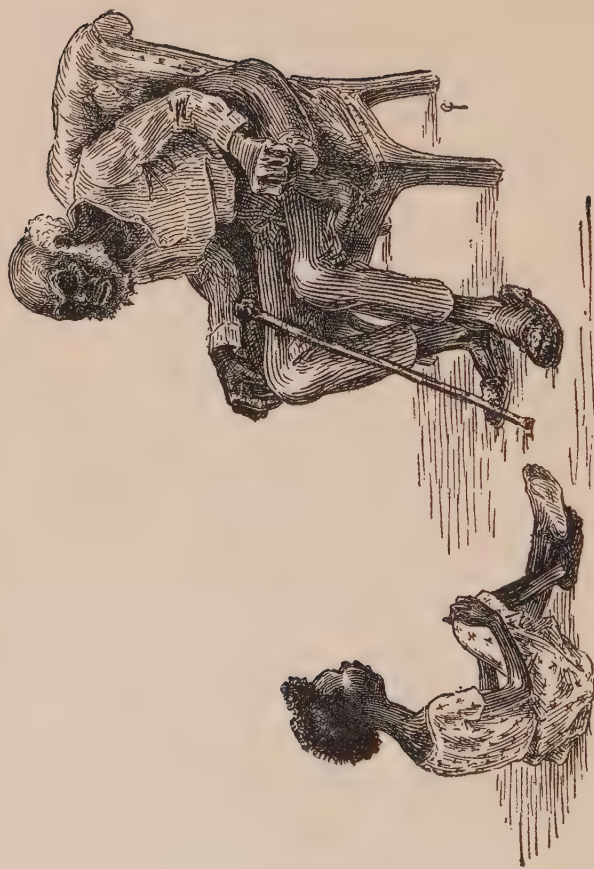
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WALL-EYED CAESAR'S
GHOST



“Dey Say Dat I Ain’t Qual’ty”

WALL-EYED CAESAR'S GHOST

POSEY was sobbing with great deep sobs as she sat in the doorway, her knees doubled up, her little woolly head buried in her hands which were also buried between her knees. There old Moses, shuffling home from the store by the aid of his hickory cane, found his little great-great-granddaughter (to his own deep distress). His dim vision had brought him near to the point of falling over her before he saw her.

“W’at’s de mattah, Posey? W’at is yer cryin’ so ’bout, hauney?” he asked anxiously. As Posey seemed slow in answering, he further asked, “Is anybody done huht yer, chile?” Still the sobs but not so hard now that she had a sympathetic ear for her sorrow. “Poah leetl’

gal!" Moses stooped the best he could, leaning against the doorway, and patted her head. Comforted by this expression of his sympathy, Posey was able to raise a face streaked with tears and dirt and finally to blurt out between sobs, "Dey's gwine ter hab a picnic an' dey won't gib meh no invite."

"Who's gwine ter hab a picnic?" asked Moses.

"De school chillen."

"Why ain't dey gwine ter gib yer no invite? Yer is a school chile too, ain't yer?"

By this time Moses was sitting in his armchair under the chestnut tree outside his cabin, leaning forward on his cane between his knees.

"Yes sah, Pappy, I is, but de uddahs say" (another sob), "dey say dat I ain't qual'ty. I'se jes Uncl' Mose's leetl' gal an' dey ain't gwine ter ax meh, an' den dey jes swisses dessefs." (More sobs.)

"Who swisses dessefs? Who mek dat 'sertion? Who say meh an' yer ain't qual'ty? Ain't we 'long ter de Hammon' fambly?" he inquired. "Didn't mah fadah dribe ole Marse Charles' coach an' foah, an' wa'n't I Mis' Ma'y Jane's muddah's own coachman?" stamping his cane and trembling with anger at the indignity put upon his little Posey. "Yer kin jes tell dem yer an' meh is mos' de onlies' qual'ty an' de rest o' dem ain't nuttin' but jes low-down new niggahs. Dat's w'at dey is. I reckons I knows de rock *dey* war hew'd out o'."

While Moses' outburst comforted Posey as to their social standing, the fact remained that there was to be a picnic and she was to be left out. This she again reiterated, rubbing away the tears with the backs of her dirty little hands, while Moses was still repeating, "Qual'ty! Huh! Dem! Mah good Lawd!"

"But 'deed, Pappy, I does want ter go ter de picnic any how," she pleaded, willing to overlook social inequalities.

Moses stopped talking for a short time as he sat looking at the forlorn child in the doorway. He was unaccustomed to thinking, but an idea was slowly taking form in his mind. "Posey," he asked presently, "W'en is dey gwine ter hab dis picnic?"

"Dis ebenin' — dis vehy ebenin' (almost another sob). "Dey is habin' it right dis minute."

"Whar is dey habin' it?"

"Obah in dat meadow on de oddah side o' de chu'ch, down de hill f'om de grabe-yard."

This time a sob did come. The thought of the fun the others were having and that she was missing was too hard to bear.

"Dat ain't so vehy fur," said Moses, and again fell into silence. Yet another

idea was dawning. "Posey," he said after a time, "Let's meh an' yer hab a picnic."

This suggestion surprised Posey into laughing. "Meh an' yer, Pappy! W'at kin' ob a picnic ken meh an' yer hab?"

"Nebbah yer min'. Yer jes' git up now an' wash yo' face an' put on a clean frock an' mek meh a bottle o' tea. I'se gwine up ter de stoah ter git a can o' chickin an' some braid an' some o' dem sossigis an' a cake. Dis bein' Sat'day, dey will hab cake, dey allus hab cake Sat'day at de stoah. I'se gwine treat meh an' yer ef it teks de las' cent I'se got. Now yer git up luk a good leetl' gal," he coaxed, "an' doan cry no moah."

The prospect which included chicken, sausages and cake was sufficiently cheering to dry Posey's tears, and by degrees she was able to enter into the

spirit of the occasion. By the time, panting with the unusual exertion, Moses came with the supplies, she was washed and dressed and his bottle of tea was ready.

"Pappy, whar's we gwine ter hab dis picnic?"

"I'se plannin' ter go ter dat hollow jes' back o' Mr. Hills' place whar de stream runs. Maybe yer mought ketch some feesh."

"Pappy, kin yer walk dat fur? Dat's right on de uddah side o' dat hill whar de uddahs is habin' der picnic."

"I reckon I kin, hauney, anyhow I'se gwine ter try. We kin go th'ough de woods an' tek de shoht cuts. It's nice an' cool dat way."

"Pappy, w'at is yer gwine ter tek yer lantun fer?" Posey asked as he took it down from its nail at the side of the house.

"Wal, it mought git dark. I'se veyh

slow walkin' dese days. Yer kin tek de baskit wid de vittles, chile."

Away from the usual roads and through by-ways and cross paths they went, the child's hand tucked in the old man's. Posey's mother had been one of the many phthisis victims of the race, her father conspicuous only, as we would say, by his absence, and to the great-great-grandfather, as the only one who would take her, had fallen the care of the little girl, as had been the case of her mother before her. It was poor enough care in nurture and admonition, but with the small regular allowance made Moses by his former white people, supplemented constantly by additional gifts of food, fuel and clothing, the two comrades did not fare at all badly as to their daily needs.

It was an early summer day and the trees and grass, the ponds and streams were vibrant with young life. Moses,

who had measured out many years beyond three score and ten, reaching well towards five score, toiled laboriously along, but to Posey's bare young toes motion was as easy as that of a butterfly. Posey had never heard the old man tell so many stories of his young days and of her old Mammy, of the ways of the birds and what the squirrels said long ago when they talked instead of chattered, of how the 'possum used to walk on two legs — all this long before he knew them.

“Posey, I reckon yer doan know how ter tell a 'possum f'om a coon, now does yer?” he inquired. She did not. “Now dis is de way dey larned meh.”

“De Coon he hab a bushy tail;
De 'possum's tail is bar'
De rabbit's got no tail 't all
But on'y a bunch ob ha'r.”

Posey's rows of shiny white teeth parted as she laughed and repeated it. That other picnic was being pushed out of her thoughts. "Jes' listen ter de frogs, Pappy," she said. "Dey sounds luk birds singin' out dar in de swamp. I wondahs why 'tis dat dey stahts out wid voices luk dat in de spring an' artah a while dey can't do nuttin' but croak."

"I doan know," answered Moses reflectively, not being an authority on frogs, "but I reckons dey jes' gits hoarse er else dey grows up an' der voices changes."

"Dey soun's luk dey kin' ob ansahs one a'nuddah, doan dey, Pappy?"

"Mebbe dey does. W'en I war a boy de people use ter tell meh dat de leetl' frog say 'I'se sleep, I'se sleep,' and de big one say 'T'ain't so, t'ain't so,'" said Moses, trying to imitate with his cracked voice the colloquy of the frogs. Again

Posey's laugh rang through the woods and found its echo in the old man's heart.

Posey had long ago taken her hand from Moses', and was skipping along ahead, back and forth, like any other happy young animal. Also, she had to have other outlets to express her joy, so, not knowing any music more fitting, her skipping was to a hymn-tune, sung with dance accent, but having sentiments which were far from mirthful,

“In de sweet fiel's ob *Eden-n'*
Poah sinnahs *stan'* all *trimbel-in'*
We' is *trabel-in, trabel-in, trabel-in*
Trabel-in home.”

She sniffed the air sweet with the scent of wild honeysuckle and chestnut bloom.

“Pappy does yer t'ink dar's gwine ter be many ches'nuts dis yeah?”

“It looks luk it, de trees is full o' blooms an' dat means a hahd wintah,”

he added with a sigh. They passed through the lower part of the yard of Mr. Hill's residence where white sheets were drying on the clothes line. "Mis' Liz Bradford cert'n'y kin wash clean," commented Posey. "Ain't dem sheets de whites', Pappy?"

"Dey cert'n'y is," he agreed, a light of new interest coming into his eyes.

Moses was glad to reach the place for their picnic and to rest on a friendly log soft with age and covered with moss, and after a long-drawn breath, glad to fill his pipe but with very tremulous fingers. "You git out de vittles, Posey, fer I reckons yer mus' be haungry, an' yer kin git a cup o' watah out o' dat cole stream an' gib meh mah bottle o' tea. I feels rale weak."

It was late afternoon when they finished their lunch. The chicken, sausages and cake were devoured to the last crumb and Moses was amply repaid for

his walk to the store when Posey said, "Dis cert'n'y is good, Pappy." Lunch being over Moses fell to dozing and Posey to paddling in the stream, letting the water trickle through her bare toes. With a bent pin she tried to entice the fish to bite at a worm she found under a stone. Tiring of her own society, it occurred to her to climb the hill to see if she could catch a glimpse of the picnickers on the other side. This was done all too easily and without their knowledge. Her return aroused Moses, who was duly told all she had seen, how they were playing games and laughing and talking and a little sob came again into her voice. "Wal, young t'ings luks young t'ings," he said, to comfort himself as much as Posey.

"Posey," he said presently, "does yer see dat crookit ole stone up at dat grabe?"

"Yes, Pappy, who's done buried dar?"

“Wal, I’se gwine tell yer ’bout dat now. Dat’s ole Wall-eyed Caesar’s grabe.” His voice lowered as if he would speak decorously. Posey’s eyes grew big with interest.

“Is he got a ghos’?” she asked.

“Dey do say so, ’do I ain’t nebbah seed him, but ole Aun’ Keziah Brown she done seed him, she say, many’s de time.”

“Oh!” Posey drew a long breath, her eyes getting bigger. “Huh come she ter see him?”

“Dey say its dis-a-way, dat Wall-eyed Caesar war buried de wrong way an’ nebbah has res’ easy in his grabe, an’ Aun’ Keziah’s gran’fadah war one o’ dem dat holped bury him an’ dat’s de reason he comes back an’ she see him.”

“How yer means buried wrong, Pappy?”

“Wal, sted o’ facin’ him eas’ dey tu’ned him de oddah way an’ faced him

wes' so his haid is whar his foots ought ter be an' his foots is whar his haid ought ter be an' so he nebbah could res' quiet in his grabe."

"My! ain't dat tur'ble!" gasped Posey. "Pappy," she said in a hushed voice, "is yer 'feared he mought come out now?"

"No, hauney, don' yer be skeert. He nebbah comes 'cept onc't a yeah an' dat's in de late fall, dat's w'en he died."

"Pappy," in brave tones, "who war Wall-eyed Caesar?"

"Dey does tell dat he war a king whar he come f'om befo' he war brung obah heah, at leas' dat's w'at he allus claim dat he war a king, an' his wife war name Sarah an' she claim dat she war a queen. He war a grea' big tall man wid big pop-eyes an' de whites ob his eyes rale blood-shot an' dre'ful lookin', an' Aun' Keziah say w'en his ghos' come, one o' dem eyes shines jes' luk a coal o' fiah.

She say he ain't got but one an' she reckons he mus' done los' de uddah one some how er uddah."

Posey's blood ran cold. "Mah Lawd, Pappy, I hopes I ain't nebbah gwine see him."

"Wal doan yer nebbah come heah in de late fall o' de year, den, now min' w'at I say."

The sun had set, and the long summer evening begun. They could hear the shrill bursts of laughter from the children over the hill. Now was the time for the old man to tell Posey his plan for punishing them. Already she was sitting very close to him in her thoughts of Wall-eyed Caesar.

"Posey," he said, "meh an' yer is gwine ter mek dem chillen wish dey had nebbah come ter dis picnic."

"What we gwine do Pappy?" She was on her feet and ghosts had gone out of her mind.

“Wal, I wants yer ter slip intah Mis’ Mary Jane’s yahd an’ fetch meh one o’ dem sheets, jes’ borrow it, chile, an’ den we kin tek it back an’ den w’en yer gits de sheet I’ll tell yer de nex’ t’ing.” Moses’ voice was halting and husky as he talked. The effort to make the child happy had used up much of his small store of strength. Full of curiosity, though frightened, Posey’s errand was done noiselessly, and before poor old Moses had had time to draw a long breath she was back with the sheet, ready for the next move. The evening was getting late and darkness had fallen among the trees, but over the hill they could still hear the children.

“Now, hauney, yer an’ meh is gwine ter jes’ crope obah towa’ds de uddah side — we ain’t gwine ter mek not a bit o’ noise ’till we gits ready an’ den we’s gwine ter gib dem chillen one orful scare.”

"How we gwine ter do it, Pappy?" her voice, hardly more than a whisper, her eyes wide strained in fearful anticipation.

"Now yer jes' listen," he whispered back. "I'se gwine ter let yer git up on mah shouldahs an' put yo foots 'round mah neck, den yer pull dis sheet all obah yer an' meh clear obah yo' haid an' let it drap down obah mah foots. Dat will look luk a grea' tall man luk dey says Wall-eyed Caesar war, an' I'se gwine light de lantun an' yer hol' it an' cobah all 'cept de light wid de sheet, an' den we's gwine ter 'pear suddenluk w'en it gits cole-dark an' I'se gwine ter gib one orful groan. I'll reckon dey'l nebbah hab no moah picnics nigh Wall-eyed Caesar's grabe."

Posey was thrilled. Her wildest flight of imagination could never have suggested anything so wonderful; it was better even than the picnic that she had

missed. Their progress to a clump of trees overlooking the other side of the hill was terribly slow to her mind, but they must be quiet and Moses found making a quiet progress difficult. It was hard to shuffle his old feet noiselessly but even had they gone their ordinary gait the picnickers would hardly have noticed it. They were too deep in games that included an endless variety of yells and screams to notice that the evening was late. Having reached their vantage point of seclusion, the old man and the child after a few minutes of rest proceeded to make their gruesome preparations. They moved toward the open with the lantern lighted. The broad trunk of a large oak had shielded them just before they slowly moved out where the enormous white figure with one great unblinking eye could stand on the top of the graveyard hill. A cessation in the games and the remark of one child, who

said she "Reckoned it war time we-all war gwine home," gave the ghost his opportunity. The children below the hill heard a groan unlike anything earthly, as they would believe to their dying day, and looking up toward the graveyard, they saw an apparition which froze their blood.

"Oh mah Lawd hab mussy! Dar's Wall-eyed Caesar!!"

To describe the mad rush, the maniacal flight with the thought of Wall-eyed Caesar's ghost pressing hard behind them, uttering deep and horrid groans and bearing down upon them with his one fiery eye, is not within the scope of words. Baskets, hats, friends—all were forgotten as each one strove to get out of the monster's reach.

Moses' chuckle over the success of his plan was as near a laugh as he had enjoyed in many a long day, and Posey, jumping from his shoulders and extri-

cating herself from the sheet, screamed and danced with fiendish joy.

“Mah Lawd, Pappy! Dem niggahs cert’n’y kin run!”

“I reckon dey mus’ be a mile ’way by dis time,” he replied presently adding, “Dat’s w’at dey gits fer not axin’ yer ter der picnic. We done paid ’em back. Now come on, hauney, an’ let’s we go home. I’s vehy weak,” said the old man.

Again they returned to the place of their own picnic and picked up the basket, bottle and cup, also the sheet which they put into the basket with the intention of returning it later. The child’s feet could scarcely keep on the ground and her tongue never ceased chattering as they made their way back unobserved along the paths they had come. It was a toilsome journey and a long one to Moses. Posey carried the basket and the lantern, for Moses’ feeble body was already overburdened with the

weight of years. This had been a strenuous undertaking for him. For many months he had been able to cover only the few hundred yards which lay between his cabin and the store, and had spent the rest of his time moving merely to follow the sun around the house, then to sit dozing in his armchair, his black pipe sometimes lit, oftener dead, arousing only when a neighbor stopped by or Posey chatted with him.

There was little strength left for the journey back. Often he had to tell the child to wait, interrupting her gay chatter while he rested against a tree or sat on a stump to get his breath. As they got towards the end, it was with what seemed the very last output of strength.

"Is we mos' home, Posey, mos' home, hauney?" he asked every little while, to be answered cheerfully by her, "We's gittin' dar, Pappy." Finally they were at the edge of the garden. "Now yer run

in, chile, an' git de lamp lit ready fer Pappy. We's home now." With his breath coming in gasps and trembling from weakness at last he stumbled over the door sill. "We's got dar now, leetl' gal — home," his voice whispered happily as his cane slipped from his hand and he fell over on his bed to sleep the dreamless sleep of a child.

The next morning Posey, still bubbling over with the joy of having successfully assisted in being a ghost, was sent with a basket to Mr. Hill's for supplies. Moses had truly carried out his threat of spending the last cent he had, and even if he had not the store was closed as it was Sunday, so he instructed her to "Tell Mis' Ma'y Jane dat we ain't got not a blessid t'ing in de house ter eat an' please, Ma'm, ter sen' wid w'at ebbah else she's gwine ter sen', a nice ham-bone fer meh ter pick at. Mis' Ma'y Jane knows I jes' lubs a ham-bone an'

I reckon she got one sabed fer meh, an' Posey, doan fergit ter ax heh fer a salt-feesh special, an' jes' a leetl' drap o' sumpthin' ter kin' o' put de streng' in mah ole bones. Drag mah cheer out dar undah de ches'nut tree an' I'll set right dar 'till yer gits back. I'se feelin' mighty weak dis mawnin'."

Sitting out in the warm, soft air where he could watch the glints of sunshine touch the leaves and feel their warmth on his tired old body, Moses reviewed his wondrous feat of yesterday. His little girl had had her picnic and had been happy, and old as he was, he had punished "dem chillen fer slightin' heh." So he sat smiling to himself over the recollection, as his neighbors began collecting at his yard-gate to tell him the news of the appearance of Caesar's ghost the previous evening, and to further discuss this matter which had already so stirred the community that

every man, woman and child was afraid to look in the darkness the night before, expecting to see that Red Eye or feel the hot fuming breath of the ghost.

They had slept with doors and windows shut tight and a lowered coal-oil lamp, emitting a smothering odor, had burned in every house all night.

They were all at Moses' fence, and by the time their news reached him it was a tale of blood-curdling horror. Annie Green said, "Mah Lilly Rose say she could smell de sulphuh an' de brimstone w'en she war neah home an' she could feel de hot bref, an' ebery ha'r on heh haid war a-standin' dat straight up dat dar wa'rnt not one single kink lef' in it. Mah Lawd! it war orful, dat chile mos' nigh perish, she war dat frightin'd." Tommy Brown's mother averred, "Dat warn't nuttin' ter w'at Tommy seed. He could tek his solemn oat' dat w'en he looked back fer a minute dat right in

his paf, mos' techin' him, war a long, bony han' jes' 'bout ter grab him an' dat de han' war rale white an' sort o' blue-shiny, jes' luk de shine on a piece ob ole wood dat yer kin see in de night an' not in de day-time." She shivered as she repeated the tale, and Mamie Lou, goin' her one better, said that her Isaiah said he would be willing to cross his heart "Dat he jes' *ba'ly* *peeped* obah his lef' shouldah an' dar he seed a gra' big mouf wide open, an' de flames a-shootin' an' sparks a-flyin'. It war cert'n'y a tur'ble sight an' dat chile's been subjick ter fits all his life an' he had one jes' as soon as his foot teched de doah sill," she added.

"I know dem chillen won't nebbah hab no picnic neah dat spot no moah but I nebbah knowed Caesar ter be vicious, gin'ly he's hahmles' 'nough," remarked Aunt Keziah Brown, who was supposed to be the usual object of his visitations.

To all this Uncle Mose had merely commented an occasional "Mebbe so, Mebbe so." Now he said feebly and sorrowfully, "I'se glad Posey warn't skeert in dis-a-way. De chillen didn't ax heh ter de picnic, dey say she ain't good 'nough an' de poah leetl' gal cried, but I reckons de angels teks keer o' heh," and the smile came back to his lips.

His remark turned the tide of conversation and brought forth many protestations against the conduct of the children and such an imputation against Posey's social standing. It was asserted that Posey was a "Rale nice chile an' bein' a muddahless orphen, de chillen ought all ter tek an intrus in heh." One after another resented any suggestion that his or her child had a hand in having thus slighted her.

Moses seemingly sat quietly listening. Finally some one asked him a question

but got no answer. "W'at's de mattah wid Uncle Mose, he's a settin' dar an' smilin' an' doan seem ter pay no 'tention. He acts luk he's gone ter sleep," said Abe Bradford, "I reckon I'll go in de yahd an' ax him is he sick." Abe went over to the old man sitting in his deep chair under the tree. His head had fallen to one side and he was asleep, very soundly, very happily. Abe called him, but he was too far away to care to answer. "Mah Lawd! Uncl' Mose is daid!" his horrified voice announced.

His friends picked him up and gently laid him on his bed. Aunt Mary Browning wiped away a tear as she said, slowly, "Poah Uncl' Mose, he's done slip 'way f'om us, jes' — done — slip 'way." Aunt Keziah, shaking her head as she seated herself in the chair so recently vacated, said she wondered what was going to happen next, she would not be surprised for her part and share

“Ef de worl’ come ter a en’.” She “knowed somethin’ war bound ter happ’n w’en de ghos’ ’peared out o’ season.” She “nebbah knowed it ter come ’cept in de late fall an dis war jes’ early summah, an’ now yer all see, Uncle Mose he done gone at las’!”

Never in the history of the community had the mortal remains of any of its deceased members had so many in attendance as fell to the lot of Moses during the two following nights before he was laid away near the grave of Wall-eyed Caesar. The usual custom was to have three or four friends watching over the dead continuously, one of the functions of a watcher being to invite others who should come “Ter view de cohapse,” for which purpose he would ceremoniously turn back a corner of the covering sheet and await the viewers’ sigh or moan and invariable comment, “Now doan he look nat’ral.” Instead of three or four, a host

gathered in this instance for mutual protection and consolation. They were gray with fright and blear-eyed from lack of sleep. What if the ghost should decide to come again while they sat with the dead man! Then, too, hadn't Aunt Keziah, who was known to be on intimate terms with "sperrits," said *she* would not be surprised if the world came to an end?

During the second night of watching a storm blew up from black skies. Terrific thunder and lightning that split the heavens followed in the wake of a heavy wind which tore trees up by their roots and limbs from the trunks that could stand against it. This was endured in grim and fearful silence. When its violence was nearly spent, Henry Johnson remarked in an awed voice "We-all ought ter be glad 'bout dis sto'm comin'. It jes' shows w'at a good man Uncl' Mose war. Dis is his sto'm. Dar's always

boun' ter be a win'sto'm w'en de good dies an' de bettah dey is de wuss is de sto'm. Dat's de shoah sign he's safe in Ab'ham's bosom."

This remark led again into speech where Moses' virtues were extolled, his shortcomings forgotten. He would have been more surprised than any one else if he had heard the encomiums heaped upon him, for he had died quite ignorant of the qualities and good deeds with which his friends were able in the kindly light bestowed by death to endow him.

"It cert'n'y war quare 'bout de sheet dat war spraid obah Uncl' Mose," Lizzie Bradford opined to Annie Green the week after the funeral, "dat war one o' Mis' Ma'y Jane Hill's sheets, an' I done miss one orf de line," although no connection between it and Caesar's ghost occurred to her.

It was long, long afterwards that Posey told Mrs. Hill, who had taken

charge of her after Moses' death, the story of the way "Pappy an' meh play'd ghos', an' Mis' Ma'y Jane, dat war yo' sheet shoah 'nouf dat war spraid obah his poah daid body, but," she added, looking up with pleading eyes, "yer doan min', does yer, Mis' Ma'y Jane?"

ANOTHER MARRIAGE OF
CONVENIENCE

ANOTHER MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE

IT WAS preaching Sunday, which came only once in four weeks. The previous announcement made by the lay brother who filled in the other Sundays with prayer and exhortation, that the pastor, Brother Tomkins, would on this day bring before the church members a matter of special importance, served as the unusual inducement for so large an attendance at Cross Roads African Methodist Episcopal Church, that its overheated and limited capacity was crowded to overflowing by a throng of both saints and sinners.

As they drove to Church on this morning in the early spring, the Rev. Mr. Tomkins and his wife had discussed the matter and the probable effect which might be produced on his congregation.

“ 'Ria, I reckon dis yer deecision o' mine is gwine ter mek some o' de people r'ar, dey'll be dat put out. W'at yer reckon? ” he had asked of his wife.

“ Reckon 'twill, but it can't be holped, Mistah Tomkins. Ef de chu'ch is got rules dey ought ter be kep', ” she replied.

“ Dat's mah notion, too, 'Ria, ” agreed her husband. “ Seems ter meh luk it's a kin' o' convenient time o' de yeah, too, fer dis conviction ter come ter meh. Yer reckon de Lawd mus'a had a han' in sendin' it? ”

“ I reckon so, Mistah Tomkins. He cert'n'y mus' know dese ongrateful people is orful slow 'bout payin' fer de care o' der souls, ” said Maria.

“ I war jes' wondahin' ef some o' dem wouldn't kin' o' s'picion dat maybe we is mo' consarned 'bout *mah* an' *yo's* own bodies den 'bout der souls w'en I meks de 'nouncement dis mawnin'.”

"Doan worry yer min' 'bout dat. It jes' got ter be did an' 'taint no sense worryin'. Yer *got* ter hab a new suit ter weah ter Conf'rence, an' a hat. An' as fer meh, I done wo'ad dis old rusty alapaca dress tell it doan look fit fer nobody, let 'lone a ministah's wife, an' dis old bonnit is been out o' fashion fer ten yeah's an' mebbe mo'. I doan keep up wid de fashions much so I doan know how long 'xactly."

"Yes, 'Ria, but yer know I's a man o' peace, an' I cert'n'y does hate ter hab ter stir up de wrath o' de people."

"I'se a 'ooman o' peace, too, but yer can't be at peace wid de worl' on a empty stomick. Now, jes' keep de gone feelin' ob a empty stomick in yo' min' w'en yer is mekin' yo' 'nouncement an' it'll kin' o' steady yo' nerbs, Mistah Tomkins," advised Maria.

"Doan fergit de ole mare," she added, "de cohn's mos' out an' dar's on'y a leetl'

bit o' hay lef' in de hay lof'. How is yer gwine ter git ter burryin's an' baptize de babies ef yo' hoss is dat weak she can't pull yer?" she asked convincingly.

"Dat's de truf," he assented. "'Ria, yer is a good argyfyer. But dese people is orful people ter r'ar w'en dey gits stahted," he added with some mental trepidation. "Howsomebah, yer jes' talk 'long, hauney. I doan 'peah ter hab de courage I did hab w'en I jes' done made de deecision."

"Maybe dey woan r'ar," answered Maria optimistically, "an' s'pose dey does. Yo' duty's got ter be did now dat yer sees it. Yer mus' jes' trus' in de Lawd, not fergitten at de same time ter let yo' min' res' hahd on de subjick ob empty stomicks."

"Now yer menshunin' baptizin's puts meh in min' I already done tuk one step in de right deerection," he said hopefully.

"Is dat so?" asked his wife, surprised, "yer nebbah tole meh nuttin' 'bout it."

"Wal, it jes' nat'uly slip mah min' ter tell yer. It war dis-a-way. Tothah day, I war obah at de chu'ch an' dat young gal o' Frank Davis' come up wid de blackes' leetl' baby in heh ahms an' ax meh ter baptize it. It war kin' o' sickly an' she war fear'd it mought die an' she didn't wan' it ter die widout bein' baptized. I knowed it war one o' dem 'gagement babies, but I axed heh "Whar's de fadah?" and she didn't say nuttin', jes' hung heh haid. So I 'monished heh wid a few words ob advice, but ob co'se de baby war innercent an' I couldn't let him die widout doin' mah paht ter lan' him in de kingdom an' I consinted ter baptize de leetl' t'ing. An' w'at yer reckon dat gal answered w'en I say "Name dis chile?" She say slow luk, "George Washin'ton, Thomas Jef-

fahson, Abraham Lin-" an' I stopped heh right at dat pint an' I say "Tut, tut, tut, Pompey, I baptizes yer in de name o' de Fadah, de Son, an' de Holy Ghos' " an' I gib heh back de chile. Den I say "Gal, it ain't wuth w'ile fer none o' yer ter ax meh ter tack de name o' dese hona'oble gemmen on ter a leetl' kinkey-haided t'ing luk dat w'at ain't got no mo' las' name dan a jack-rabbit. I jes' ain't gwine ter be a pahty ter no sich a deesgrace. Ef yer gals doan git propah fadahs fo' yo' chillen I's gwine ter gib 'em de fus' shoht name dat pops intah mah min' an' dat's de reason I names dis chile Pompey."

"Yer done right, Mistah Tomkins, yer done jes' right," repeated Maria solemnly. "Pompey's good 'nough name, mebbe too good fer es I knows."

"'Pears ter meh dat in some ways de collud people is a cu'ius people, doan it seem dat-a-way ter yer?" she asked.

"How yer mean 'special, 'Ria?" he inquired.

"Wal 'special I war jes' t'inkin' 'bout dis subjick w'at yer gwine ter bring up dis mawnin'. Huh come dey ain't mo' perticklah 'bout gitten' propahly jined in de bonds o' mat'imony? Doan 'pear ter meh dat dey wants ter tek 'spons'bility, nowadays."

"Dat's jes' it, I reckon," answered her husband. "Trouble is dey is too free — dey wan's all de priv'liges o' bein' mah'ied but dey doan wan'ter tek none o' de 'sponsibility. Dese sence-de-wah nig-gahs ain't much nohow," he added despondently. "But I's made mah deecision 'bout dis mattah an' I'se gwine ter mek'em obey de rule o' de chu'ch an' I gwine ter tell 'em so dis mawnin'."

"Yer is right, Mistah Tomkins, yer jes' keep dat in min' long wid de fac' dat yer is got ter hab new cloes dis yeah ter go ter Conf'rence an' mo'obah de uddah

fac' ob empty stomicks an' yer won't be deescouraged. W'en I war a gal I recklec' hearin' Mis' say 'Man's imp'tunity war Gawd's op'tunity,' I reckon dis is one o' dem' 'casions," suggested Maria.

"I reckon 'tis," assented Brother Tomkins.

They drove along for a while in silence, both deep in thought.

"'Ria," said her husband after a while, "does yer know w'at dis early spring day meks meh t'ink 'bout? An' mebbe too, its 'ca'se I been t'inkin' 'bout mah'yn, but it meks meh t'ink 'bout de day yer an' meh war mah'ied."

"It war a day jes' like dis," assented Maria.

"Yer war a good lukin' gal, *deed* yer war! An' yer is good lookin' yit, hauney, 'spite o' de years."

"Dat war a elegint weddin', Josie," her old eyes shining, "Mis' gib meh de putties' w'ite muslin dress fer de wed-

din' dress an' a fine veil an' got meh some *rale* o'ange flowahs. An' she gib meh a nice Sunday dress an' a hat wid roses on it, an' some eb'ry day dresses, an' two par shoes an' stockin's an' a whole lot o' undercloes."

"She an' Mars'e fix' meh all up, too, wid cloes an' hat an' shoes an' all dem t'ings," interposed Mr. Tomkins.

"An dat weddin' cake what Mis' had Aun' Rachel mek! I b'liebe it war as big as de top ob a barrel!" added Maria, laughing at the recollection. "An' didn't we hab a gran' jubilee dat night artah de weddin' a-singin' an' dancin' wid ole Unc' Jim tweekin' de fiddle. Seem luk mah ole feet wan's ter dance, jes' ter membah it," she added, as her feet began to shuffle.

"Wal, I reckon we bettah stop dis kin' o' talk, 'Ria. We mos' at de chu'ch now. I hates ter tek up dis burden," he sighed, "but yer has holped meh a

lot — yo allus does holp meh, 'Ria," he added appreciatively.

"Seems ter be plenty o' people heah dis mawnin'," remarked his wife.

Having tied his horse, the minister and his wife passed on to the church, exchanging greetings with various friends on the way. The members of the "Singing and Shouting Band" followed and filed into their seats. They were lead by Abe Bradford, lank and stoop-shouldered, assisted by his wife, Lizzie, proportionately robust, and both so sincerely black that no suspicion could possibly connect them with Caucasian forebears. They, with the other brothers and sisters in the Lord who formed the band, all unsuspecting of what the preacher had in mind, sang and prayed as usual. The band had no hymn-books, each line being first repeated by either the preacher or a brother or sister who could remember a few lines, then sung

by all in concert, with prayers interspersed.

Many of the church members, for some reason intelligible to their own race, had omitted the simple matter of a marriage ceremony, in fact had "Jes' took up wid one anuddah." The couples had, for the most part, been faithful and some had lived together long enough to have housefuls of sons and daughters. As the omission carried with it no loss of caste, social or religious, the marriage ceremony seemed to them a work of supererogation. Indeed, sometimes the rite had been known to make trouble for those who honored it, for there were worthy people, both men and women, who, not finding their elected mates congenial, could have changed partners with comfort and dignity had they not been deterred by the fact that divorces were expensive and so had felt bound to endure dissension at home, and to

have relationships in secret with affinities — relations which unquestionably at times caused a certain amount of scandal. So most of the people in the church “jes’ lived togeddah.”

After a sermon on the Seventh Commandment, which had caused appreciable uneasiness among his hearers, Brother Tomkins took occasion to say that his heart was sore troubled about numerous members of his congregation, and especially about members of the “Singing and Shouting Band” who had neglected this important detail of matrimony.

“An’ Bred’rin an’ Sistahs, I is heah dis bright an’ boo’ful day o’ de Lawd’s, ter say dat I pupposes wid Gawd’s he’p ter do de mah’yin’ ob yer po’ los’ lam’s an’ sheep, obah w’ich I is de app’inted shephe’d. Now, my los’ lam’s and sheep, ’specially yer o’ de ban’, I wants yer jes’ ter step down ter town an’ git yo’

licinses an' I will do mah poah bes' ter git yer all propahly jined in holy mat'i-mony, an' den I will intahcede wid Gawd in heabin' axin' Him ter fergit an' fergib yo' sins ob omission an' dem o' commission 'ca'se dar is too many 'gagement babies in dis yer congr'gation."

"Moreobah, mah Bred'rin an' Sistahs, I will say dat untel dese cer'monies is obserbed dar ain't gwine ter be no mo' ban' singin' an' shoutin' in dis church, an' widout menshunin' names, I will say dat ef yer ax de leader o' de ban' why I meks dis las' named deecision, he mought be able ter gib yer some info'mation dat, bein' de shephe'd o' de whole flock, I is not willin' ter dees-close."

With this gentle innuendo hurled at the leader of the band, the preacher sat down in the pulpit chair and wiped his dripping brow, while the non-church-members tittered, and the members, not

knowing what else to do, shouted "Amen!" To say that consternation seized the assembled congregation described the state of feeling feebly. The benediction being pronounced, the people gathered in small knots and discussed the situation.

It was a serious matter — licenses cost money, and then there was the double expense of paying the preacher his fee. Money was hard to get just then, and after much and prolonged discussion a committee was appointed to wait upon the preacher and ask him to defer taking action until pea-picking season, when easier times could be counted upon.

"Br'er Tomkins," said Lemuel Wilson, as he slowly twirled his hat with both hands, "we hab been app'inted a committee ter talk wid yer consarnin' de mattah ob yo' deecision dis mawnin', sah."

Brother Tomkins' effort to fortify himself for the onslaught was effected by giving his wife a signal to come to him. Maria had been waiting for him at the door, and taking in the situation, bade a hasty good morning to the women who were talking to her on the same subject, and answered his summons.

"Is dat so!" answered the minister.
"Wal, w'at is de committee got ter say."

"Ob co'se we knows dat yo' reemarks hab de truf behin' 'em but as we-all hab been libin' dis-a-way fur a good many yeahs, an' been gittin' 'long vehy peaceful luk, we is in doubt 'bout mekin' dis change. W'at yer t'inks 'bout it yerse'f, sah?"

"Wal, I already done tole yer in de sahmon w'at my 'pinion is," answered the minister.

"Yes, sah, so yer is, but ain't dis deecision kin' o' suddin luk?"

“Mebbe ’tis suddin, but den de conviction dat war sont meh war kin’ o’ suddin, too, an’ I’m bleege ter ac’ ’cordin’ ter de conviction dat war sont.”

Lemuel scratched his head before answering.

“Ob co’s e it wouldn’t be right fer chu’ch membahs ter ax yer ter fly in de face ob yer convictions. We-all ain’t a-gwine ter do dat, but de giner al feelin’ is in favah ob axin’ yer if yer couldn’t ’pease yer conscience an’ at de same time holp de people ’long by jes’ waitin’ a couple o’ mont’s ’foah yer carrys out dis deecision.”

Brother Tomkins shook his head and replied solemnly:

“De Bible say, “*Now* is de ’pinted time.’”

Maria nodded her approval. The committee looked at the spokesman.

“Yes, sah, dat’s true, too, an’ dar

ain't *no* verse in de Bible dat we-all would 'spute but it do say somewhar dat dar's a time fer eb'ry t'ing an' it doan seem ter we-all dat dis is de 'special time fer ter git mah'iage licinses."

"Maybe it doan seem dat-a-way ter yer, but as I told yer in de sahmon, it seems ter meh dat de time is come an' I mus' follah dis conviction."

"But Br'er Tomkins, de question is whar is we ter git de money?"

Brother Tomkins shook his head.

"Yer see, sah, in 'bout two mont's mo' de pea-pickin' time'll be heah, an' 'sides dars plenty o' wuk ob all kin's," argued Lemuel. "Doan yer b'lieb yer mought ease yer conscience 'long tell den?" he asked anxiously.

Brother Tomkins looked at Maria. He saw no signs of yielding on her face.

"No, Bred'rin," he answered, "I done heard de *voice* o' de Lawd, an' it ain't

wuth w'ile argyfyin' agin it. I can't let yo' souls peh'ish by deelayin'.

"We 'preciate dat," said the spokesman, discouraged, "but yo' fees is got ter be paid, too. Ain't dey, Br'er Tomkins?"

"Yas, dey is, dey cert'n'y is!"

"Wal, couldn't dey be put orf 'tell pea-pickin' time?"

"No, Bred'rin, dat couldn't be done nuddah," he answered after casting a glance in the direction of Maria. "Yer see, it's dis-a-way, nex' mont' I'se got ter go ter de Conf'rence an' de Bishop will ax meh all 'bout de 'fairs o' dis chu'ch. Now yer gemmen would be moughty 'shamed ef I war bleegee ter say dat dis chu'ch war so poah dat it would hab ter be made a mission chu'ch, dat de people is dat bad orf, dey can't eben pay der preacher ter mah'y dem. Ain't dat so, gemmen?"

They agreed that it was.

"Wal, den yer see, it can't be did."

"Jes' so," answered Lemuel; "but, Br'er Tomkins, money is vohy hahd ter git jes' now. Would yer min' takin' paht ob yer fees in cohn er veg'tables an' sich, er mebbe a chickin er a leetl' pig?"

"No," he answered, after obtaining a mute consent from Maria, "but min' I won't tek *all* dat-a-way. I mus' hab paht in money."

"An' we doan want no cabbidges ner turnips," spoke out his wife. "Yer knows, Mr. Tomkins, dat we got all dem we kin use, buried in de gahden, dat we riz las' summah."

"Yas, dat's so, dat's so, bred'rin," he repeated to the committee. "No cabbidges ner turnips."

"Den, as we-all undahstan's it, Br'er Tomkins, yer is sot yo' min' ter hab all de mah'yin' done an' paid fer by nex' preachin' day?"

"Yes, Bred'rin, dat is jes' 'xactly mah

meanin'." I jes' can't tek no mo' chances wid yo' souls. Ef de Lawd call meh ter 'pear I got ter gib 'count o' dem. Dat's too great a resk fer meh ter tek. Yer ought ter be t'inkin' 'bout dat resk yerse'fs," he warned. "Moreobah yer oldah men an' 'oomen ought ter set a 'xample ter de young people in dis yer mattah."

Now that his determination had evidently been accepted and that storm of angry revolt which he had feared had not arisen, the preacher's mind was relieved and he was able to speak more forcibly.

"Dese young people doan 'pear ter eben tek de 'sponsibilities o' raisin' der leetl' chillen. An' der is cert'n'y a big crop o' dem ebry yeah, 'specially artah camp meetin'. Sometimes 'peah ter meh luk dars mo' souls got dan der is sabel by de camp meetin's. Yit der muddahs is de on'y parent dey seems ter hab.

An' bred'rin dis ain't right an' I'se gwine ter do mah bes' ter stop sich gwi-ins-on. De long an' shoht o' de mattah in han' is dat I'se gwine purge dis chu'ch o' sich notions. Now, gemmen, as I got ter preach at de chu'ch 'bout five miles f'om heah dis artahnoon, I'll 'nounce dat dis meetin' is obah and de deecision stan's jes' es I put it out dis mawnin'!"

The result of the committee's interview was promptly communicated to the church members, and the effect it produced was most depressing. It is easy to see that the prospect of having a system of ethics forced upon them for which they would have to pay, without recognizing any reason whatever in it, was sufficient to account for a gloomy Sunday afternoon at the various half-dozen houses that formed Buzzard Town. The food clause was only a mitigation, for although they had none to spare, it could not be stealing, in such a good

cause as this, just to *take* some corn or potatoes, or whatever was most available, from some one or another white person.

Within the cabins there were obvious signs of depression. Ordinarily after returning from church and having dinner, visiting and cheerful gossip occupied the rest of the day, or when spring sunshine like this lured them outside, the men would lean against the pig-pens or a fence and discuss the relative advantages of various spots of ground for the raising of potatoes or beans, and speak of the growth of their pigs, while the women held converse on subjects of strictly feminine interest. But on this day everything was quite different.

The men sat quietly inside, occasionally dozing when not too much occupied with their own thoughts or with desultory conversation, and the women, not knowing how else to occupy their

idle hands (the present fashion of knitting on Sunday not having come into fashion), "wropped" their hair with long strings. This was entirely contrary to usual Sunday observances, for the custom was to comb it out on Sunday and not "wrop" it again until Monday. The children got out of doors and played quietly, perfectly certain that parental cares were liable to find outlet in dealing sundry cuffs and admonitions if they should get noisy. Even the hound-dogs of the cabins shared the strained feeling and, shrinking to the sunny side, curled down among the piles of leaves as unobtrusively as possible.

However, at the home of Abe and Lizzie Bradford, the situation gradually assumed a more cheerful aspect. They were both good workers and had steady employment besides owning a couple of acres of land outlying the settlement. So that they, having threshed the

matter out, aided by the suggestions of their children, decided, rather than to allow the Band to be banished from church services, to set a good example to the other members by getting married as soon as the necessary preparations could be made.

“W’at in de name o’ sense meks Br’er Tomkins put dis on we-all jes’ at dis time?” inquired Lizzie of her husband.

“I doan know, ’cept he say dat his conscience say it woan let him put it orf,” he answered.

“Seems ter meh his conscience done woke up moughty suddin.”

“So it do ter meh, but de committee couldn’t do nuttin’ wid him do we argy-fyed de bes’ we knowed how dis maw-nin’,” said Abe, who had been one of the committee.

“Bre’r Tomkins is a hahd haided ole man w’en he gits sot,” said Lizzie.

"He 'peared dat-a-way dis time, 'do I nebbah knowed him ter git so sot befo'," said Abe.

"Wal, ef it's got ter be did, we mought jes' as well git ready fer it."

"Whar's yer gwine hab it, mammy?" asked one of her daughters.

"In de chu'ch, I 'spose. W'at yer-all t'ink?" she asked of the children, who were sitting around.

"Chu'ch weddin's is de bes'," answered one of them, "an' dars jes' 'nough ob us fer ter hab foah bridesmaids an' de boys be de ushahs."

"Look luk ter meh, yer-all is plannin' ter hab a big weddin'," remarked Abe.

"Wall, yer an' mammy *ought* ter hab a nice weddin' an' set a 'xample ter de uddahs," his daughter answered conclusively.

"W'en yer reckon it's gwine come orf?" asked another member of the group.

"Dar's a lot ter do, but we mus' git it obah befo' de nex' preachin' day."

"Yer bettah set a day an' den lib up ter it," suggested Abe.

"Wal, 'Monday fer healf, Tuesday fer wealf, Wednesday de bes' day ob all!' We's got healf, t'ank de Lawd; we ain't got wealf, but we is bettah orf dan some people; I reckon we bettah say two weeks f'om nex' Wednesday," Lizzie decided.

"Yer's gwine hab it in de ebenin' ain't yer?" was the next question. "Ebenin' weddin's looks de bes'!"

"W'at yer t'ink, Abe?" asked Lizzie.

"Any ob 'em suits meh, Lizzie. I ain't much ob a han' 'bout weddin's. My paht will be de payin', I reckon. I jes' been settin' heah lookin' obah mah min' 'bout dat an' its done tol' meh ter pay de preachah in money an' not in no low down way wid vegetibles an' sich," answered Abe, "An' w'en I goes ter git

de licinse. I'se gwine ter de bank an' git five dollahs in *rale* gol'."

"Now ain't dat gran'!" exclaimed Lizzie, smiling proudly. This unlooked for grandeur met with the approval of the entire family, giving them a feeling of genuine superiority.

"Now dat's orf my min' I b'lieve I'll jes' step in de nex' room an' tek a nap o' sleep an' let yer-all settle de res' o' der plans," said Abe as he shuffled off.

Nothing short of death could have kept any of the invited guests away when the evening for the wedding finally arrived.

First entered, two by two, the four daughters of the contracting parties, attired in new tarltan gowns, one in pink, one in purple, another in yellow, and the fourth in blue, each gown the most vivid shade of its color. They all carried bouquets of paper flowers of the color of their gowns, and wore flowers

in their hair to match the bouquets. Their bare necks and faces and their hair all shone with freshly rubbed-in oil.

Then followed the bride, her face as shiny as glass. She was wonderful in her crisp, virgin-white wedding dress with a long veil of cotton net, and petticoats so stiff that Abe, who trotted meekly by the side of his triumphant partner, found barely room enough to move between the two rows of seats. He was attired in a black coat which had seen many years of service, but which was supplemented for the occasion by a fancy waistcoat, plaid trousers and new pointed shoes.

The preacher arose, his face radiant with joy, to meet the couple — the most lucrative result of his “deecision.” Poor Mr. Tomkins had nearly fallen in a fit of apoplexy when Abe had handed him five gold dollars along with the license. As usual he scorned the use of books

and married them impromptu, but, having a good memory, he carried the ceremony through admirably. Although he made unaccustomed use of a certain formula, associated with more lamentable occasions, by adding at the conclusion of the ceremony, "An' may de Lawd hab mussy on yo' poah souls," nobody wondered at it, and it lent added impressiveness to the occasion.

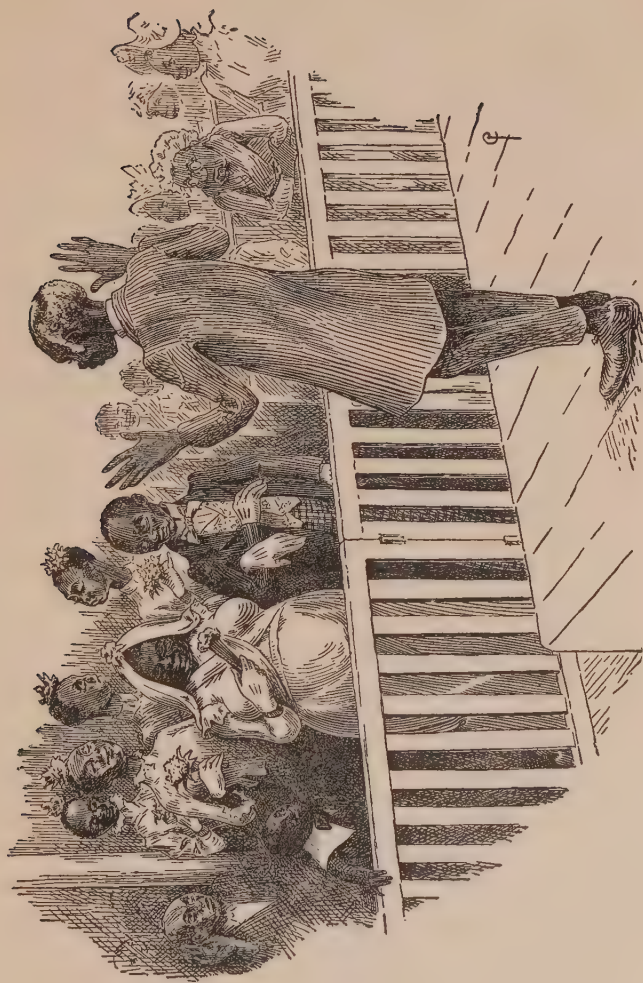
After the ceremony, the preacher, following the usual custom, kissed the bride and shook hands with the groom, congratulating them. Next in turn the newly married pair kissed each other, then the members of the wedding party, each in turn, kissed the bride and shook the hand of the groom, after which kissing the bride became general, and Abe's hand was wrung by everyone present.

The wedding supper which came later was a feast. The new silver-plated

knives, forks, and spoons were the gifts of the sons and daughters and received proper admiration. The 'possums were a present from John Higgins, the colored Nimrod.

It is true that Annie Green committed a breach of good manners by declaring that the chickens "Warn't nebbah raised by Liz, dey war Mis' Ma'y Jane Hill's breed, 'c'ase she hed picked too many chickins fer heh not to know dem, and she heard dat Mis' Ma'y Jane had been missin' chickins lately," but the reason she nearly choked was because she laughed so hard at her own wit, and had nothing whatever to do with the method by which the chickens had been obtained.

The wedding cake, surrounded by candles, was a triumph of Lizzie's own art. The bride, leaning on her husband's arm, stuck in the knife according to proper usage, and when the affair came to an



“An’ May de Lawd Hab Mussy on Yo’ Poah Souls”



Abe Celebrated the Honeymoon and Eased
His Feet

end, everybody, showering renewed good wishes as they left, voted the wedding a brilliant success. Indeed, it was said by some of the guests that "eb'y body made 'miration 'bout it" — for not only was the food unsurpassed, but they had three kinds of drinks, whiskey, beer, and cider.

For a week the honeymoon was properly enjoyed. Lizzie did no laundry, but wearing her best Sunday dress, she entertained friends who came to wish them happiness. The men were asked politely to "res" their hats, and all were invited to "tek a seat an' set down," whereupon they were served cake and lemonade. Abe, feeling that he did not shine in social functions, preferred to celebrate the honeymoon in his own way, so he, too, laid off from work and, still wearing his white shirt and his best hat and new trousers, sat on a sugar barrel on the porch of a near-by country

store, luxuriously smoking "two-fers," as he eased his feet. Being an apologetic man and unaccustomed to loafing, he explained:

"Dat weddin' cert'n'y war too much fer mah nerbs, but I'se gwine ter git ter wuk jes' es soon es I kin git use' ter bein' a mah'ied man an' feel kin' o' settled."

When the next preaching Sunday arrived, Mr. Tomkins could conscientiously welcome the members of the Band in their usual seats. All the couples had been joined in matrimony. He also had money ready to buy himself the needed clothes and hat, and his heart rejoiced that Maria would be able, at last, to lay by the rusty "alapa-paca" and get a new one, and a more up-to-date bonnet. Besides, there was on the shelves of their pantry a large store of groceries, varying from salt to flour, including canned fruit and preserves.

There was corn in his cornhouse and
hay in his hayloft.

And the Band began morning service
by singing,

“Tergeddah let us sweetly lib,
Tergeddah let us die,
An’ each a stahey crown receib,
An’ reign above de sky.”

AN ELIZABETHAN REVIVAL

AN ELIZABETHAN REVIVAL

“ I wan’s ter be a angel
An’ wid de angels stan’
A crown upon — ”

Sang a high-pitched child’s voice.

“ Yer Queen,” came a rude interruption, “ ef yer doan git de bresh-broom an’ sweep dis yard yer’ll be dat angel *long* ’fore yer wan’s ter be, ’ca’s e I’s e gwine ter massacree yer all obah, now dar.” The threat was from Queen’s mother, Lizzie Bradford, standing at her washtub, the white foam of suds making a background for her sleek black arms.

The singing stopped and from around a corner of the house appeared the counterpart of Lizzie, only on a smaller scale. Her hair was “ wropped ” in spikes and stood out bravely from her head; her skin and black eyes shone in the morn-

ing sunlight. There was nothing in any way remarkable about her that would seem to befit so splendid a name, except her costume, which was very grand indeed. On this hot July day she was wearing, above the soiled, faded print skirt and bare feet and legs, a brilliant crimson satin bodice of unique cut and no fit at all. Behind her followed her retinue, a yellow hound-dog and a blinking, dirty white pig chained to the butt of a log. Lizzie looked at the trio for a minute, then went on with her work. Queen disappeared around the corner with her brush-broom and again began singing "I wan's ter be a *angel*," to the swish, swish accompaniment of the broom.

Just then Annie Green, a neighbor, happened along, and stopped to exchange greetings (and for more material purposes).

"How's yer dis mawnin', Mis' Bradford?"

“Wal, I ain’t much, Mis’ Green,” said Lizzie. “How yer fin’ yo’sef?”

“Meh? Oh, I ain’t *nuttin!*” Annie answered, depreciatingly, coming into the yard and sitting on a chicken coop. The coop was empty of chickens, but was kept to be used in emergencies, which would probably occur when neighboring white families should forget to untie the dogs, and be so careless as to allow chickens to roost in the trees on moonlight nights.

“Dat cert’n’y is a fine wais’ Queen got on dis mawnin’, Mis’ Bradford, but it look sort o’ hot. Huh come I ain’t seed it befo’?”

“Tain’t no wondah yer ax meh ’bout dat wais’,” Lizzie answered, laughing and showing rows of white teeth. “Yer see it’s dis-a-way. Queen, she war up ter Mis’ Ma’y Jane Hill’s one day, an’ she seed dat wais’ up in de attic, an’ she ax Miss Ma’y Jane fer it, an’ she jes’

kep' on beggin' day artah day 'till las' Miss Ma'y Jane, she laugh an' tell heh ef she'd dig de plant'in out o' de front lawn, she mought hab it. Dat chile cert'n'y did wuk on dat plant'in, an, yis'day she brung de wais' home. She ain't no whar neah Miss Ma'y Jane's size an' fig-gah. I done tuhn it in in de front an' done took it up in de back an' it doan fit yit, but law! Queen is jes' tickled ter deaf ter git it."

Annie shook her head solemnly.

"Mis' Bradford, yer oughtn't 'courage Queen in weah'in o' fine clo'es. Yer know de Good Book speci'lly menshuns weah-in' o' cos'ly 'parel an' dat shore is cos'ly."

"Wal, I reck'n 'tis cos'ly, but den de res' o' her clo'es oughtah kin' o' balance t'ings in de eyes o' de Lawd," argued Lizzie.

"Wal, may be dat's so, fer dat caliker dress is right faded an' mos' ready ter drap orf, it's so ole. Mis' Bradford, huh



“She Jes’ Min’ Me ob One o’ Dem Late
Roses”

come yer ter gib dat chile a name luk dat?" asked Annie reflectively. "Doan seems ter me it's any rale name *no-how*."

"Wal," answered Lizzie, "it war jes' dis-a-way. In de fust place w'en Queen come artah de weddin' she jes' min' me ob one o' dem late roses w'at comes 'round 'bout Chris'mas time w'en it 'peared luk de bushes done fergit all 'bout bloomin'. Den all ob a suddin' out comes a rose an' it's de bes' one de bush ebbah boh'd. Wal, dat's jes' de way wid meh an' Abe. Yer see, meh an' Abe war gettin' 'long w'en we had dat weddin' an' it jes' seemed luk we tuk a new lease o' life an' den come dat leetl' baby gal, an' de namin' o' dat chile war mo' trouble dan all de res' o' dem put togeddah; seem luk we couldn't git one good 'nough. All de res' o' dem hab got Ann ter der names, dar's Julie Ann, an' Susie Ann, an' Rachel Ann, an' Sadony Ann," she said, count-

ing on her fingers, "so we war jes' nat'aly tired o' Anns an' names does look kin' ob bob-tailly widout a Ann ter dem. Wal, my ole mammy war libin' den an' she say; 'Hauney, yer name dat chile fer heh Aun' Queen, yo' leetl' sistah w'at died, 'ca'se she war one o' de 'lect o' de kingdom ef dar ebbah war one, an' she war bohn out o' season too.' So dat's huh come Queen to git heh name. O' co'se, she's got Ann foh heh fust name. Ann Queen is de whole name, but she ain't nebbah been called only jes' Queen. Yer see, Mis' Green, yer wan't bohn heh an' o' co'se yer wouldn't be 'spected ter know 'bout t'ings w'at 'longed ter we-all w'at's been bohn an' riz heah, 'ca'se we is kin' o' qual'ty an' yer's a new comah."

"I'se jes' much qual'ty as yer," sniffed Annie.

"Oh, I doan mean no 'spar'gement," Lizzie hastily assured her. "I war jes' 'splainin' de reason fer Queen's name,

but de main one is 'ca'se I wan's heh ter be luk heh Aun' w'at had de same name an be one o' de 'lect, not dat I wan's heh ter be so good dat she wouldn't be fittin' ter lib in dis wickit worl' an' de Lawd would hab ter tek heh 'way. Howsome-ebbah, I doan see no signs o' dat yit," she added. To which comment her neighbor grunted an assent and rose from her seat on the coop, saying wearily:

"Wal, I mus' be goin' 'long now an' see 'bout dinnah. My ole man'll be comin' home soon, an' I jes' step by ter borrow de loan ob a haid o' cabbidge. My garden cert'n'y is back'ard dis yeah."

Lizzie, who was quite used to this request and the comment that always followed it, took her arms out of the suds and wiped them on her apron. Then, with a carefully selected dry corner, wiped the beads of perspiration from her forehead. Pulling a head of cabbage from her garden close at hand, she handed it to her

neighbor with the remark that she ought to make Johnnie *plant* a garden.

"Yes, dat's so, Mis' Bradford," acquiesced Annie, but changed the subject to remark, "Queen cert'n'y do seem moughty happy dis mawnin' all on 'count o' dat raid wais', I reckon. Jes' listen ter w'at she's singin' now. 'I'se de chile ob a King, de chile ob 'a King.' Yer bettah min', Mis' Bradford," she added solemnly, "an doan fergit de wahnin' o' de Good Book I menshun'd jes' now 'bout fine clo'es."

"Oh, go 'long, Mis' Green," Lizzie answered, laughing, "I got a kin' o' no-shun," she added, "yer mus' wan' dat wais' fer yo' Lilly Rose, but doan yer fergit dat de Good Book say, too, 'De laborah ought ter git paid fer w'at he do.' I reckon dat means 'oomen an' chillen, too, an' Queen wuk hahd pullin' up dat plant'in, as I jes' done tole yer."

Having no other biblical quotation to

offer in support of her position, Annie ignored the thrust at her possible spirit of envy, and announced that she would be going on.

That summer passed pleasantly for Queen. By virtue of her name and the dignity given her by her brocade bodice, she deputed her chores to the other children of "Buzzard Town," as the half-dozen houses forming the settlement were called. They fetched and carried at her command, "slopped" the pig, swept the yard, and pulled the weeds out of the vegetable garden, so great is the power of clothes. Lizzie was little concerned as to who did them, so those jobs were done, and gave no heed to the criticisms of her neighbors, who asserted that "Lizzie war raisin' a good fer nuttin', lazy gal."

Far back in the woods skirting Buzzard Town was a bit of black pine forest.

In its heart was a clearing, with the stumps of felled trees still standing. To this clearing the small coterie of children went daily after the chores — which they dared not neglect — were finished. Here, enthroned on the tallest stump, Queen held court, according to her conception of the proper method of procedure as shown in her school history.

One day, however, royal prerogative overstepped. Queen commanded one of her courtiers to take off his clean jacket and let her walk on it, *à la* the picture of Sir Walter Raleigh in the school history. He rebelled.

“ I ain’t gwine ter let yer walk on mah jacket, Queen er no Queen. Yet t’ink I gwine ter git a lickin’ jes’ fer yo’ foolish-niss?” he demanded. “ No suh, gal, Mammy would jes’ natu’ly skin meh,” and he shook his head determinedly.

“ So dat’s de way yer treats yo’ Queen, w’en she jes’ wants ter show yer how

much she t'inks o' yer?" said the indignant sovereign.

"Wal, I ain't gwine ter do it, dar now!" answered Sir Walter rebelliously.

"Yer ain't? Den I is gwine ter punish yer, sah. T'row 'im down an' bin' 'im, yer uddah lawds," commanded Queen, and down he went.

Assisted by the queen, who from somewhere in the depths of her bodice produced a piece of strong twine, he was securely bound.

"Now yer, sah," addressing one of the other lords, "yer run ter de house an' git a axe."

Off he went as fast as his legs could carry him, and was back with the axe in a marvellously short time, for affairs at court were pressing.

"Mah Lawd! Queen, w'at is yer gwine ter do ter meh?" asked the prostrate knight, becoming alarmed, during the absence of the messenger.

“Doan yer want ter know too much, yer Sah Waltah, yer’ll know soon ’nough, but es Sah Jimmie is done come now wid de axe I will jes’ tell yer dat I’s gwine ter hab yo’ *haid cut orf*; I’s de Queen an’ yer is jes’ gwine ter min’ meh.”

One wild yell for help rang out through the still woods. The next was choked in its incipency for at Queen’s command a gag was thrust between his teeth. It was an awful moment for Sir Walter (alias Johnnie Green) — there was the axe in the hands of the valiant knight, Jimmie, and there stood the inexorable Queen. He could only writhe in a frenzy of fear, his eyes nearly bursting out of his head, but his struggles were so violent that the order for beheading him seemed difficult of execution.

“Mus’ I knock him in de haid, Queen?” asked the executioner.

“No, dat ain’t de way dat de hist’ry



“Yer Jes’ ’Bleege ter Cut Orf His Haid”

book say. Yer jes' 'bleege ter *cut orf his haid*, dar ain't no uddah way."

Another violent struggle and Queen ordered another subject to "Go set on his haid, Sah Tommy Brown, w'ile Sah Jimmie cuts it orf."

Just as Sir Tommy had accomplished his preparations for the decapitation, the course of history was deflected. The special providence which is accredited with the care of children and drunken men inspired Mr. Hill's bull to interfere in Sir Walter's behalf. He did not appear silently as did a ram at a former sacrificial occasion, but came bellowing and snorting through the underbrush.

"Oh, mah Lawd!" yelled Queen, "Run, chillen, run an' git up in de trees quick! Dar comes Mistah Hill's ole bull!"

Following her own advice and dropping all semblance of dignity her nimble legs and arms had transported her into

safety almost before her warning had been given. All of her subjects except poor Tommy were many feet above the ground when the bull dashed upon the scene. The crimson bodice which he had been eyeing, he found out of his reach. In his rage he picked up "Sah Waltah" on his horns and tossed him gaily over the fence. But as the horns had been rendered harmless by being tipped with wide brass discs, the hapless knight suffered no injury except from a few bruises and from fright as he was hurled through the air. Having disposed of the one victim on which he could vent his disappointment, the bull turned his attention toward the exciting bit of red perched in a treetop beyond his reach. He pawed the earth, he snorted, his bellowing grew louder as his feet dug into the soft ground.

"Queen, he's artah yer!" yelled Jimmie.

"Oh, mah Lawd in hebbin, w'at is I gwine ter do?" screamed Queen desperately.

"Why doan yer all git down an' chase him?" she called.

"No *indeed*, not meh!" "Meh, nuthah," "Meh, nuthah!" came the answers from the various treetops.

"He's a pawin' de groun' loose f'om de roots o' de tree yer is in!" said a voice excitedly.

"He's gwine ter git yer, Queen!" another voice.

"Jes' look how dat tree is a-shakin'!" yelled another.

"Oh, mah good Lawd, w'at meks him come artah meh? I ain't done nuttin' ter him!" Queen yelled back.

"It's yo' wais', dat raid wais', he's artah. Chuck it ter him, Queen."

"'Deed I woan! Ef it's jes' dis wais' w'y doan yer git down an' run him 'way wid a club? Yer ain't got no raid on yer,

an' he woan huht yer," answered Queen consistently.

"No, sah!" came the answer in chorus. "Yer tek it orf an' chuck it ter him. Yer bettah let him hab yo wais' by itse'f den de wais' wid yer in it," suggested Jimmie.

"Jes' look at dat tree shakin'! Yer bettah hurry, Queen, he's boun' ter pull it out o' de groun' an' dat tree yer in ain't got deep roots nohow, dey is shallah, mighty shallah!"

The tree was truly shaking, but if Queen had been able to see herself, it was shaking because of her own fright as she moved farther and farther up.

"Johnnie," said Queen, in a soft appealing voice, "woan yer please w'iggle rale *hahd* an' try an' git loose so yer kin t'row some stones at him?"

Johnnie wriggled but without effect.

"He can't do nuttin'," remarked Jimmie from his safe perch, "Yer done fix him."

"I didn't," answered Queen furiously, "yer fixed him yo'se'f, yer tied him."

"Wal' yer holped meh, Queen, yer know yer did. Queen, yer is a wickit gal. Now yer see how yer is gwine ter git punished."

"Oh, yes, 'co'se yer wan's ter put all de blame on meh. Yer jes' wait till I gits at yer. I'll pull eb'ry hair out o' yo' haid, yer Jimmie!" she threatened.

Another angry bellow from the bull.

"Johnnie, jes' try once mo' — try rale *strong*. Yer know yer is a strong boy. Jes' see ef yer can't jerk de cohd," she called persuasively to her knight on the other side of the fence. "Deed, Johnnie, I didn't ra'ly mean ter let dem cut orf yo' haid, I war jes' a-playin', 'deed I war. *Please* jerk *hahd*, mebbe it'll gib."

Johnnie did his best, but in vain; the cord did not give.

"Jes' look at dem orful eyes o' his'n!" cried Jimmie.

Queen looked. She realized the sacrifice must be made. It was like tearing the flesh from her bones to part with the beautiful waist, but apparently it must be done.

She pulled off the darling bodice, and flung it wildly to the red-eyed monster below. "Dar, tek it, yer ole debil!" she yelled, her fears at last having conquered.

Queen expected to see it torn to shreds before her eyes, but instead it spread in its descent and landed on the outstretched horns, one arm slipping over one horn, the other horn being festooned with the larger part of the garment, so askew, however, that a flap of it fell over the bull's eyes in a way to blind him.

Infuriated and blinded the bull turned tail and fled. Not knowing which direction to take, he took the one where his appearance would cause the greatest

consternation. Busy with their usual occupations, the thunder of his roars made all the women of Buzzard Town rush to their several doors.

"In de name o' de Lawd!" screamed Lizzie Bradford, "w'at is de mattah wid Mistah Hill's bull?"

"I b'lieb he's gone mad—he's a standin' on his haid!!!" Which was quite true, he was standing on his head, his tail straight out, trying to rid his horns of their encumbrance.

"W'at's dat he's got on his hohns?" excitedly asked Susan Johnson from across the way.

Lizzie looked again. "Oh, Lawd o' mussy, it's Queen's wais'—he's done kilt heh! Oh, mah poah leetl' chile!" she wailed.

"Look at him runnin' ag'in; he's gwine right to de ribah. I reckon he's gwine drown hisse'f!" Annie Green screamed from the doorway.

“Whar did dat chile go? He’p me fin’ heh, eb’rybody, he’p ter fin’ heh,” called Queen’s mother.

“Whar’s Johnnie, whar’s Tommy, whar’s all de chillen?” cried the various distracted mothers. “I know I hear’d a scream jes’ a leetl’ while ago!”

Then somebody remembered that the children always played out among the pine stumps, and they made a wild rush for the spot.

“Oh, mah poah chile, she’s de one dat’s huht, she’s de one dat had on raid. Did de bull hab blood on his hohns?” she asked anxiously as they hurried over to the pines.

Nobody knew, but everybody thought so.

“Den I *know* she’s kilt, mah poah baby!” wailed Lizzie. “We mought fin’ heh *daid* body any minute.”

All of them were crying as they looked for Queen’s dead body, although they had

been comforted in a measure by Lizzie's assurance of the probable safety of the rest of the children.

Lizzie's cry reached the children in the trees before they saw the party. "Oh, Queen! Queen! Whar is yer? Whar is yer?"

"Dat bull's done run down by de house and dey t'inks we is *kilt*," surmised Isaiah Johnson.

"Heah I is, Mammy," answered Queen's voice very meekly from the tree-top.

The mothers stood for a moment, speechless from mixed emotions.

"Oh, t'ank de Lawd!" exclaimed Lizzie, "dey's all safe, dey ain't been kilt — Dey is settin' up dar lookin' luk a lot o' crowbirds in de treetops."

Annie Green's eyes were searching for her own offspring. "But whar's Johnnie — he war wid de res' o' dem?"

"He's on de uddah side o' de fence in

de pastah, Mis' Green," answered Isaiah tremulously.

Annie looked over the fence. He was there, sure enough, but not able to speak for himself.

"In de name o' de Lawd, w'at is yer chillen been doin?" she inquired as she recognized her son bound and gagged.

"Nuttin', 'cept we war jes' gwine ter cut orf Sah Waltah's haid."

"Sah Waltah!" shrieked Annie Green, climbing over the fence, "Dis ain't no *Sah nuttin'*; it's mah Johnnie!" and with hands less tender than effective, she jerked the gag out of his mouth and the cords from his arms and legs, threatening vengeance on the whole outfit.

The children were aghast; they knew something was bound to happen, and expected a thrashing all round.

"It's dat Queen's doin's," shouted Annie Green in the wild confusion of

explanations and excuses, which followed, "an' I'se gwine ter beat heh."

"Tain't none," yelled Lizzie, "it's dat Jimmie's doin's. Dat's yo' axe, Mis' Brown."

"Wal, yer, ner nuttin' luk yer is gwine ter beat *him*!" shouted back Jimmie's mother, and wild grew the torrent of words.

Each mother wanted to beat the child of somebody else, and each mother avowed that it could be done only "obah her own daid body," until soon the mothers were engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with one another, interspersing blows, hair pulling, and scratching, with remarks even more violent. The set-to waxed so fierce that the children, climbing out of the trees noiselessly, were able to leave the scene unnoticed in the grand mêlée. Four very much injured women — injured both in body and mind — later hobbled into Buzzard Town, and

some very meek children tiptoed to their several homes when they deemed it safe.

But the feeling engendered by the affair among the stumps did not subside. In wrath toward one another, which found many means of expression, no mother would allow her child to be blamed. They all escaped, but were forbidden to go out and play in the woods again, on the penalty of "ketchin' it," which, vague as it may sound, had the deterring effect the mothers intended, and the court was indefinitely abolished.

THE END OF THE FEUD



Woe Betide the Dog

THE END OF THE FEUD

AFTER having given warning to the children not to go again to the woods to play, the matter of the rescue from death of one of them by decapitation and of the rescue of others from injury by the onslaught of a maddened bull quickly faded into insignificance in the minds of those mothers of the Buzzard Town who had been participants in the fight, when compared with the ever-present feud, which, having its beginning in that affair, daily gathered venom.

No one of the four women deigned to speak to another — each said the other was a low-down niggah.

Woe betide the dog or cat that happened to stray into the yard of another. A yelp or a wild rush, followed by various brickbats or stones, announced that

had such a visit been projected on one side, it had also been provided against on the other. And as for the stray pig!! His fate was indeed pitiable. The barking of a dog, followed by loud and prolonged series of squeaks, again followed by the appearance of interested and voluble heads at the various windows, and then the hasty retreat of the pig to his own quarters, also the return of the dog to his own pile of leaves, bringing in his mouth a bloody bit of tail or ear, told the story of occurrences which did not serve to pour oil on troubled waters.

Words fail to express the strenuous life of the town's inhabitants the rest of the summer. Naturally the husbands came in for a share of the general social upheaval. They might speak to each other only out of the sight of their warring wives.

Needless to say, the disturbance was the momentous subject of discussion

upon the outside, no one venturing to predict the final outcome. Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego Dorsey (Shad for short), the philosopher of the community, who was also an apostle of relaxation, being able to relax almost anywhere, on the end of a lawn-mower or against the side of the store, or by standing first on one leg and then on the other, his hands meanwhile resting in his pockets, remarked apropos of the matter one day, as he draped his long body over a fence, "Dat es fer es I kin see, in mah jedg'ment, us cullud people hab got on'y jes' sense 'nough ter git *intah* trouble."

However that may be, things grew steadily worse, as the days wore on, despite the efforts for reconciliation made by the preacher, who admonished them of their sins and told them what they might expect in the future life.

"Taint de paht o' Christians ner ladies ter ac' so," he remarked to Sister

Green, in these efforts. "Foh de Bible mos' pertickelah do say, 'Let de dawgs baww an' bite, 'ca'se 'tis der natah ter.'" Upon which Sister Green accused him of saying she was a dog and no lady, and drove him out of the house on penalty of being scalded with a kettle of boiling water which she snatched from the stove. Feeling was indeed running high when such a thing could happen, but as the time for camp meeting was approaching, as a matter of policy and personal safety, the preacher decided to await this meeting, knowing they would be sure to attend, no matter how much they had backslidden. The excitement of Camp Meeting draws all alike whether good or bad.

The customary preparations were made for the meeting. A space among the trees outside the church was cleared of underbrush, and benches built of rough boards formed a large seating capacity,



The Philosopher Shadrach Meshack and
Abednego Opines



Sister Green Accused Him of Saying She Was a Dog and
No Lady

square in form. At each corner of the square oil torches were hung on trees and in front of the improvised pulpit was the mourners' bench, a thick carpet of clean straw laid around it.

The meeting began and progressed. Abe Bradford led the band as usual, but unsupported by Lizzie and the other three sisters. In various unaccustomed places, as far separated as space would permit, they sat each night, or, like one of old, "stood afar off."

Nightly the mourners' bench teemed with "new seekers" and nightly the prayers ascended, with special mention of "back-sliders"; nightly the choir sang itself hoarse, "Come ye sinnahs, poah an' needy" and "Come ter de Lawd an' seek Salvation." The session was nearly over—the preacher, the church members and, more especially, the forlorn husbands, were in despair.

The last night of that meeting was

long to be remembered. Brother Tomkins reported later at the church conference. "It war a moughty man'festation o' de power o' de Lawd." He preached a sermon on the separation of the "Sheep and the Goats" and his lurid description of the Last Judgment so terrified the congregation that it expected to see the heavens open as his sermon closed and the whole dreadful scene be enacted then and there. Men were groaning, women moaning and there were cries of "Sabe us, Good Lawd! Hab mussy on us, poah sinnahs!"

No apparition having appeared after a few moments had passed during which Brother Tomkins had sat with head bowed in prayer, he arose and, waving his hand for silence, called upon Brother Green to lead in prayer. A great supplication poured forth from Brother Green as he swayed his body to and fro, touching the floor with his forehead and ap-

parently without protest from his vertebrae nearly reaching the floor with the back of his head also, his prayer interspersed and followed by "Amens" and exclamations of "Yes, Lawd" from men and women. In the midst of his prayer he got so heated that, with the explanation that he was "Burdened wid de 'cumb'ances o' de flesh," an explanation thrown in any direction where it might excite interest, he tore off his stiff collar and Sunday coat, and his example was followed by the other members of the band. As they rose from their knees a hymn sung so low that it was a mere deep murmur was begun by two or three men, but presently taken up by both men and women it swelled into a mighty chorus; the rich bass and falsetto voices of the men, the shrill soprano and low voices of the women mingling in lines which were first recited by the leader. They were rather awful words.

“ Muddahs an’ Fadahs dar shall paht,
Muddahs an’ Fadahs dar shall paht,
Muddahs an’ Fadahs dar shall paht
At de Jedg’ment seat o’ Gawd.

Chorus:

Oh dar will be weepin’, weepin’, weep-
in’, weepin’
Oh dar will be weepin’ at de Jedg’ment
seat o’ Gawd.”

“ Sistahs an’ Bruddahs dar shall paht
Sistahs an’ Bruddahs dar shall paht
Sistahs an’ Bruddahs dar shall paht
At de Jedg’ment seat o’ Gawd.

Chorus:

Oh dar will be weepin’, weepin’, weep-
in’, weepin’
Oh dar will be weepin’ at de Jedg’ment
seat o’ Gawd.”

Still the four obdurate women held
back refusing to be saved although it was

evident to Brother Tomkins trained eye that it was with great effort. He felt that he must put on more pressure as these backsliders still resisted. Old Aunt Mary Browning, known to be powerful in prayer, was in her customary seat and to her Brother Tomkins turned. "Will Sistah Brownin' lead in prayah?"

"Lawd he'p heh," yelled a member, and the air was rent above the clamor with moans and shouts and amens. A silence fell so hushed that only the sounds of crickets and katydids in the trees could be heard when Aunt Mary began her prayer. Even the amorous youths making earthly love back in the shadows left off and crept near the worshippers.

She began in a low, singsong tone. Gradually her voice came fuller and louder, and as her prayer grew more importunate, the motion of her body increased in force and velocity, till, from

a gentle sway to and fro in her own pew, she was in the aisle of the church, her body plunging back and forth in mad abandon, her voice reaching its highest pitch, and perspiration streaming down her face.

“Oh Jesus, Oh, Mistah Jesus (I eben calls yer Mistah 'ca'se I doan wan' ter treat yer wid no deesrespec') — Oh Lawd,” she implored, “hab mussy on dese foah errin' chu'ch membahs, yer knows de names, so I doan hab ter speak 'em, but hab mussy Oh Lawd, hab mussy on dese souls dat is nigh ter bein' los'. I *knows* it, I *sees* it now, in a *vision*,” she screamed, her eyes rolling spasmodically, her hands stretched out. “An' I sees de pit o' hell an' de Debil hissef, an' *dey* is right *obah de pit ha'r-hung* an' breeze shook, an' de light f'om *hell-fire* is *a-shinin'* on 'em an' de Debil is a-stampin' his hoofs an' a-shakin' his hohns an' a-lashin' his tail, an' — an', Oh



“ I Sees It Now, in a Vision ”

Lawd! jes' look now, he's gittin' his *wings ready ter fly!!!* Dar is jes' time ter sabe 'em, Oh Lawd, hab *mussy, hab mussy! !*"

Her ending came in a mad shriek as she fell forward, and simultaneously four other shrieks as wild as her own rose over the tumult, for, by the time the prayer was finished, there was a maelstrom of groans and cries for mercy which changed into a great song of

"Joy, joy, joy
Dar's joy in heben wid de angels,
Joy, joy, joy,
Our prod'gals returned,"

sung by the multitude as the four sisters threw themselves with one accord at the mourners' bench. Religion was not hard to get that night. It ran like a contagion and before the congregation had recovered from their joy at the sight of the sinners seeking repentance, Lizzie was

shouting "I done got it, bress de Lawd," and had already turned round and round with such speed and kicked so high that her foot had caught in Brother Green's galluses and had to be extricated. But she was not discouraged by this trivial incident for it was commonly reported the next day that "Mis' Lizzie Bradford cert'n'y took a good shout las' night." She shouted down one aisle and up the other, embracing everybody within her reach in the triumphal progress incited by her exultation, including Brother Tomkins, who emerged half smothered. Annie Green was satisfied to jump up and down and spin round like a top. Susan Brown fell in a swoon and had to be laid on a board to recover, but Mamie Lou, usually a quiet person, expressed her feelings by shrilly yelling, "Glory! Glory! Glory!" in rising crescendoes and while wirely springing to and fro and clapping her hands, calling out

"Somebody hol' meh! Somebody hol' meh." This was accomplished by Ananias Gray, a stalwart member of the shouting band, and as he was a widower and she a widow, some of the ungodly tittered, by this time feeling reasonably assured that the day of Judgment had been postponed. When his voice could be heard, Brother Tomkins announced that the meeting would close after a march around the grounds. The Shouting and Singing Band leading, this ceremonial proceeded, and their voices, husky and tired but still equal to the occasion, poured forth above the joyous sounds of newly redeemed and returned souls —

"Oh, dar will be shoutin', shoutin',
shoutin',

Oh, dar will be shoutin'

At de Jedg'ment seat o' Gawd.

Pahents an' chillen dar shall meet,

Pahents an' chillen dar shall meet,

Pahents an' chillen dar shall meet
At de Jedg'ment seat o' Gawd.

“Bruddahs an' Sistahs dar shall meet,
' Bruddahs an' Sistahs dar shall meet,
Bruddahs an' Sistahs dar shall meet,
At de Jedg'ment seat o' Gawd.”

After Camp Meeting, Buzzard Town speedily resumed its neighborly conditions, which were all the more friendly because of the period of isolation. Being of a gregarious nature, it had been hard indeed to restrain the impulse to visit back and forth and dreary enough to go alone on errands when they had been accustomed to go in groups. When Lizzie Bradford pulled up her winter supply of cabbages, she sent Queen with a large bag of the choicest heads to Annie Green. “Queen, yer tell Mis' Green I sen's 'em wid mah lub. Now yer hears w'at I says, does yer — wid mah *lub*. It cert'n'y's a pity Annie's got sich a poah p'ovidah fer

a husban' an' I'se sorry fer heh but doan yer tell heh I say so, now min' w'at I say."

In one of the years past all the parties most concerned in the disturbances had gone on an excursion to Harper's Ferry and had there had a group tintype taken. A copy of this was accustomed to stand on the mantelpiece or shelf in each household. But while ill feeling towards each other had prevailed, these had been removed and placed face downward in chests or bureau drawers so hateful had seemed the faces of their one-time friends. One of the evidences of the restoration of friendship was the restoration also of the photographs to their accustomed places.

Never in their lives had Brother and Sister Tomkins had so many invitations to supper as followed. They were the center of a group at least once a week, the group being the same every

time only at houses of different members.

On the evening they supped with Annie Green the latter thought it was an opportune moment to refer to an incident which seemed to her to need an explanation, so she said, "Br'er Tomkins, yer mus' know dat de time I spoke 'bout scaldin' yer, I was jes' in fun," and she laughed lightly. "O' cose yer knows dat I wouldn't do nuttin' luk dat. I'se dat tendah hahted dat I wouldn't huht a fly let 'lone a min'ster o' de Gospel. I wouldn' so much es cut orf de haid ob a chicken only we jes' can't eat 'em alibe an' I reckon chickens war made to be et. I hope, Br'er Tomkins, yer aint got no grudge 'gainst meh fer dat leetl' bit o' fun, is yer?"

"No, no, Sistah Green," protested the minister, in haste, "we mus' all fergit an' fergib as is writ in de Good Book," and so the incident closed.

Also Brother Tomkins officiated at another wedding as one of the outcomes of the meeting. Ananias Gray had asked Mamie Lou shyly, "Mamie Lou, did yer luk de way I helt yer at de Camp Meet-in'?" and she, giggling, said, "Oh, go long, w'at yer wan' ter know fer?"

"Ca'se I was gwine ter say ef yer did luk it, I wan's yer ter let meh go on hol'in' yer fer good hauney."

So things between them did not take long to adjust. From the house which he rented he went over to the neat little cabin she had bought. He put his pig into the pen where her's was already fattening, and his children and household goods went over to join her's.

Susan Brown said to her husband one Sunday morning, as she looked at a pile of missiles which had been collected to throw at offending animals in the receding past, "I cert'n'y does wish yer would tek dat pile o' stones and brickbats an'

put 'em in a hole or somewhar out o' sight. I'se tired o' lookin' at dem an' de chillen mought trow dem at each uddah er a dawg er a chicken er somt'in an' huht it an' dat cert'n'y would be a pity. I doan know how come dem stones to be heah, no how," she added with innocent forgetfulness.

Susan further demonstrated her friendly spirit by sending word to the newly wed Mamie Lou that "Es mah pig is daid an' es she's got two in heh pen now she's welcome to mah slops." This worked out well for Susan also, for when Mamie Lou killed hogs, she sent her neighbor "a mess o' sossidge, some spareribs an' cracklin's fer a pone."

Punishment in the end reached the real offender and poor Queen was stripped of her glory. Lizzie said that she intended to cut "dat raid wais', de cause ob all de trouble" into pieces for her crazy quilt — and moreover she averred

that "Queen" should be called "Ann" from that time on until she should "git manna's an' behabyah same es heh Aun' Queen, w'at had de same name, always did hab."

The bodice was replaced in Queen's wardrobe by a faded red calico dress, which, having become worn in front, had been patched with a large piece of new goods resembling a breastplate in shape and size, dignified but not magnificent nor regal.

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1925 Wall-eyed Caesar's ghost

